

Paired Nouns Are OK Sometimes male- and female-specific nouns don't suggest problematic messages. Pairs such as "prince" and "princess;" "duke" and "duchess:"<sup>3</sup> "abbot" and "abbess"<sup>4</sup> are unobjectionable.s In these pairs, the male specific term never refers to both males and females. Even though it 2s might be convenient to have a word to refer to any child of a king or queen, "prince" can only mean a king or queen's son. So, if the sexes are treated equally, each one having its own term, the female-specific term is probably OK. Some Gender-Neutral Nouns, Such as "Flight Attendant:"<sup>30</sup> Have Become Standard The next-easiest cases are those where a gender-neutral term has become popular. In recent decades, gender-neutral terms, such as "firefighter:" "police officer:" "mail carrier;" and "flight attendant" have gained currency.<sup>6</sup> Definitely use these. 35 Problems Arise When a Noun Exists to Call Out Only One Sex The troublesome cases are when we have one term that can refer to either sex, and another that refers only to women. Take the word "author:" It can refer to men or women in a sentence such as, "Our agency represents many authors:" But if you use "author" to refer to writers of 40 either sex, and the exclusively feminine "authoress" to refer to female authors, you now have a way of referring specifically to female authors, but no way of referring specifically to male authors. The implication is that most authors are male, and that it's worth pointing out when one of them isn't. As The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language says, 45 "The marked term suggests some difference in status and may imply lower standards or achievement.